

SINKING YOUR TEETH INTO COMPOSITION:
TEACHING ENGLISH USING “QUARTIER DE LA MADELEINE”

by

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Thesis directed by Professor Michelle Comstock

ABSTRACT

To meet the diverse needs of composition students, *Sinking Your Teeth into Composition: Teaching English Using “Quartier de la Madeleine”* offers English teachers an additional resource to supplement lectures and textbooks. Vincenzo Natali’s “Quartier de la Madeline,” the 15th short film in the feature film *Paris, je t’aime*, offers insight into several composition fundamentals, which this guide will explain. First, this guide introduces “Quartier de la Madeleine” and explores its overall value in the composition classroom. Second, it investigates Emmanuel Benbihy’s film assignment that created *Paris, je t’aime*, and how Benbihy’s assignment is akin to composition assignments. Third, by examining the organization and structure of “Quartier de la Madeleine,” teachers can unpack how this construction parallels the introductions, bodies, and conclusions of students’ papers. Forth, by looking at the Aristotelian, Toulmin, and Rogerian arguments in Natali’s film, students can recognize these rhetorical devices and begin using them in their own writing. Fifth, this guide explains how the evolution of “Quartier de la Madeleine,” through storyboard and behind-the-scenes featurette, offers insights into students’ drafting, from revision to proofreading. English teachers are encouraged to use any or all of this work to supplement their composition instruction.

This abstract accurately represents the content of the candidate’s thesis. I recommend its publication.

Signed Michelle Comstock
Michelle Comstock

DEDICATION

Lesa and I fell in love over film. We met on the 10th of October 2002. Lesa and I talked about movies we've seen. We chatted about screenplays we were writing. We sang songs to each other from *Moulin Rouge* (dir. Baz Luhrmann, 2001).¹ Ever since that day, the cinema has been an essential aspect of our relationship. Even today, Friday is our date night and our favorite rendezvous is dinner and a movie.

Since I began this thesis in 2009, it has sucked the life out of me; however, like the vampire in "Quartier de le Madeleine" who saves the tourist from death, Lesa has saved me repeatedly. She is my dark angel who gave me the undead strength to go on. It is with all of this in mind that I dedicate this thesis to my wife for her undying support and understanding.

¹ The actual *Moulin Rouge* ("Red Windmill") is located in the Pigalle quarter of Paris, so Paris itself has also been a fundamental aspect of our relationship since the very beginning...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hello. My name is Benjamin Syn and, like you, I am a composition teacher. I have been teaching composition since 2008; however, my undergraduate degree is in psychology and film studies. I started out in psychology and followed this path for several years until one day I took the elective course “Introduction to Film.” Of course I knew that I could get a degree analyzing literary texts, but never before did I realize I could get a degree analyzing a filmic text. In this class, my professor opened my eyes to the world of visual argument. After finishing my Bachelor of Arts degree, I began work on composition instruction and my Master’s in Rhetoric and the Teaching of Writing. As Valerie Muller has shown, although students learn effectively through the written word and standard lecture, they are captivated by film (32). Furthermore, students comprehend ideas so much more fully when they learn a concept via a multimedia text such as a film. In this handbook, I am going to synthesize my knowledge of film with my expertise teaching English to create a guide that will help you engage your students and more effectively teach composition. The work you are now reading, *Sinking Your Teeth into Composition*, is the teaching manual I wish I had years ago when I first started teaching.

In this handbook, we will follow the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, who advocated in *The Aims of Education* “that educators should not teach too many

subjects, and what they do teach should be taught thoroughly” (qtd. in Buckland 126-7). Unlike similar works that try to examine several different feature films in relation to varying aspects of English instruction, this guide embodies Whitehead’s idea by focusing on one short film, “Quartier de la Madeleine,” and applying it specifically to composition instruction.

The use of film in the composition classroom is not a new concept. Dale Adams and Robert Kline advocated this idea in 1975. However, they offered some legitimate concerns of incorporating film into the classroom: feature films are often lengthy, short films are rare and those that do exist are often low quality, it used to be expensive to buy or rent film, it was a logistical nightmare to get a classroom into an environment capable of screening a film, and composition teachers often lack confidence in teaching a subject like film. *Paris, je t’aime* and this handbook can overcome these obstacles (although you will still need to find a multimedia classroom, but if you can offer a PowerPoint presentation, you can likely screen “Quartier de la Madeleine”). First, *Paris je t’aime* is only 120 minutes total, and of that, we are going to focus on “Quartier de la Madeleine,” which at six minutes can easily fit into a class period. Second, the DVD or Blu-Ray for *Paris, je t’aime* is inexpensive and readily available to purchase at Amazon.com, rent at Netflix, or borrow from your local library. As for the lack confidence, come with me through the

rest of this handbook and I will show you everything you need to teach composition using “Quartier de la Madeleine.”

Cinema & Students

Our diverse students learn in a variety of styles, and they need a variety of instructional materials to assimilate the knowledge we are striving to help them learn. With a vibrant, multisensory structure, movies can underscore and illuminate the various concepts and perspectives—such as analysis, argumentation, organization, and rhetoric—that we strive to convey in our composition classrooms. As Chee-Hoo Lum of Singapore’s National Institute of Education observes:

When used effectively, feature films can bring a plethora of visual and aural stimulation to students and enhance their learning ... Feature films can take students to places, sights, and sounds that they have yet to experience. After watching these films, students might become new admirers or even keen followers of the subject at hand. (71)

The motion picture can express more than a thousand words, either written or spoken, could ever hope to achieve. Adams and Kline note, “Probably the greatest single advantage of using a short film in the classroom is that they have for the student an immediacy of impact that reading assigned material outside of class does not have” (259). We will use this immediacy to inspire our students. In relation to composition, we will use “Quartier de la Madeleine” to understand how assignments shape a final

product, the parts of text, and how various texts—from feature films to our students’ papers—participate in a larger conversation.

Movies are shared experiences. Professor Rebecca Johnson highlights this, “One of the real advantages of weaving one particular film throughout the term is that it provides a collective point of reference. Once all of the students have seen the film, they share a common factual narrative that can be returned to again and again” (qtd. in Adjin-Tettey 2006). Johnson here is emphasizing how screening a film in class gives us a common text that our students can return to repeatedly. In case you are concerned that film has limited application to composition, Adams and Kline “suggest that *all* the major rhetorical elements of written composition (connotation, denotation, the methods of discourse, cliché, comparison and contrast, deduction, induction, etc.) may be illustrated visually by cinematic equivalents” (260). Following my handbook, we will screen the film “Quartier de la Madeleine” and all of our students will have this film as a point of reference. As we explore this work over the semester, we unpack how this short film comments on assignments, organization, argument, and the drafting process.

How We Write and How It Is Read

I wrote this thesis with a reader like you in mind, an intelligent English teacher who wants to use film to help your students more fully understand

composition concepts. Creating this work, I made several rhetorical decisions on the shape of this piece and how I wanted to construct it. I want to unpack these choices, show the effect that they had, and explore how even these choices are teachable moments for our classes.

While I could have written this guide in the distant-but-professional third-person, I decided that particular tone would estrange us from each other. Instead, I went for the first and second person. Doing so allowed me to offer my personal insights and mention specific options you have for your pedagogy. By predominantly using “we,” I was able to make us equals in the academic conversation about using films to teach English. I concede it is a bit presumptuous on my part. I perhaps made claims about you and us that simply are not true. If this happened, I apologize. I merely wanted to create an embracing work that invited you into these pages. These are some of the decisions our students will have to make as they compose their papers.

Whether our students write predominantly in the third-person or the first-person depends greatly on them and us. Many of my students, fresh out of high school, were taught solely to use the third-person. While this does create a certain level of scholarly detachment and professionalism, it also inflicts distance and estrangement. Worst of all though, students still feel compelled to talk about

themselves in this third-person and construct bizarre sentences such as: “This author found Natali’s short work insightful into the vampire genre.”

First person is far more engaging, but even more problematic. When we allow students to compose in the first-person, they often slip into a very conversational and inappropriately friendly tone.² The other issue with first-person is that students often use it to undercut their arguments. Afraid of taking a wrong stand, students hedge their claims by adding “I think,” “I feel,” or “I believe” to it. Take an example like, “I think Natali is recalling the silent era through his film stock and absence of dialogue.” This is safe. No one would ever tell this student that he or she does not *think* that. However, how much stronger would this claim be if the student cuts off the hedge phrase: “Natali is recalling the silent era through his film stock and absence of dialogue.” That is a claim, and a controversial one at that. I could easily imagine an equally intelligent student advocating that this film stock and absence of dialogue is to heighten the horror mood, having nothing to do with the early cinema, especially since Natali himself admits to not using silent era techniques (“Quartier de la Madeleine” behind-the-scenes featurette).

No matter how our students ultimately decide to construct their essays, it is imperative that we explain the rhetorical effect of using the third-person or the first-

² Perhaps much like this handbook.

person.³ It is our prerogative to insist that our students write one way or another, but even if we prohibit one option, it is still worth the conversation as to why. And if you do allow your students to choose, but students are struggling which way to go, insist that these students emulate the literature they are reading (e.g.: if most of the research on a particular film is written in the first-person, tell the student to do the same.)

Background and Forecast

I designed this guide to address many of the fundamentals of composition and organized the guide how I would teach it, starting with assignments and building to a finished product. In this first chapter, I introduce this work and explain its pedagogical value. In the second chapter, I discuss assignments, both the one that created “Quartier de la Madeleine” and several that this film helps teach. In the third chapter, armed with an assignment we want our students to complete, we unpack the arrangement and structure of this movie and how these parallel the arrangement and structure of their essays. In the fourth chapter, we examine the aspects of argument in this film, enabling our students to analyze a text and to create arguments of their own. In the fifth chapter, presuming that students have already submitted an initial draft, I highlight revision and proofreading in both film and essay creation. This paragraph

³ When students ask, and they often do, I will take a few minutes to discuss the effect of the *second* person, but will warn them that this conversational device quickly causes an essay to become grossly nonacademic.

outlines this guide, but the rest of this chapter will offer some background to contextualize these chapters.

Parisian Emmanuel Benbihy came up with the concept of *Paris, je t'aime*. He invited directors from all over the world to come to Paris and film brief vignettes about love; however, each of these films had to follow a specific assignment. We will explore Benbihy's assignment in detail a little later and discuss how this assignment could have eighteen different but equally correct solutions. Robert Moss advocates, "If a thoughtful choice of movies is made, the following can definitely be achieved: greater student attentiveness and involvement, ... and a more energetic, committed effort on writing assignments" (142). By using *Paris, je t'aime* in our courses, we will see that not only will we get more engaged students in the classroom, but we will also see them produce better papers. In chapter two, we will explore these ideas further as well as some assignments that we can build off this film, such as the critical essay and the definition essay.

To understand "Quartier de la Madeleine," we first need to explore its narrative: Lost and alone in the back alleys and stairs of Paris, a tourist (Elijah Wood) happens upon a vampire (Olga Kurylenko) feasting on her victim (Wes Craven). The vampire corners the boy but then rejects him. Desiring the vampire, the tourist slits his wrist and offers it to her, but again she refuses. The tourist slips on blood and plummets down the stairs. The vampire saves him by giving the boy her blood. The

narrative of “Quartier de la Madeleine” is organized into three chronological parts—a beginning, middle, and end—which we will more fully explore in chapter three where we will unpack how this structure can parallel the three elements of an essay: introduction, body, and conclusion.

“Quartier de la Madeleine” has some very recognizable members of its cast and crew. First, the star of this film is Elijah Wood who became world-famous for his portrayal as Frodo Baggins in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (dir. Peter Jackson, 2001-3). Second, playing the vampire is the lovely model and actress Olga Kurylenko, who you may recognize as Bond-girl Camille Montes from *Quantum of Solace* (dir. Marc Foster, 2008). Third, finishing the cast of three is the master of horror—and fellow *Paris, je t’aime* director—Wes Craven. Canadian filmmaker Vincenzo Natali wrote and directed “Quartier de la Madeleine”; however, Natali has made a name for himself as the writer and director of a couple of genre features. Most known for his 1997 graphic horror classic *Cube*, Natali recently released his science-fiction thriller *Splice* in 2009. Understanding the background that these four bring to “Quartier de la Madeleine” will help our students understand the ethos that various sources offer, the ethos our students will create as they learn about a subject, and the ethos that we have as teachers. We will explore his idea fully in chapter four, along with other aspects of Aristotelian appeals, the Toulmin model, and Rogerian argument.

The “Quartier de la Madeleine” short is from the *Paris, je t’aime* film; however, the *Paris, je t’aime* two-disk special edition DVD offers two especially useful special features that are invaluable to composition instruction. The first is an animated version of Natali’s storyboard. This early version shows definite similarities to the final product, but also drastic differences including that Natali originally envisioned a more violent death for the tourist. In addition to this storyboard is a behind-the-scenes featurette where Natali reveals a mistake that he had to correct through a retake. In chapter five, we will talk about both of these special features and use them to reveal the evolution of “Quartier de la Madeleine,” as well as how our own students’ writing progresses and grows through revision and proofreading.

Armed with this knowledge and these resources, you just need to decide what and how you will teach composition using “Quartier de la Madeleine.” You are welcome to all the ideas in this guide, beginning with the next chapter and going through to the final one, or you could merely take the ideas that resonate with your personal teaching philosophy. Whatever you decide though, this guide is yours, so sink your teeth into composition.

CHAPTER 2

ASSIGNMENTS

As composition teachers, we have a method for giving assignments to our students. Many teachers have written assignment sheets, others offer verbal assignments, and some of us offer a combination of both. Traditional teachers may care more for the product their students create, while contemporary teachers may focus more on the process of writing. There are many paths to effective composition instruction. Our assignments tell our students what they are to do to meet a particular outcome, why a particular assignment is important to our course, and a lot about us—who we are and what we value. In this chapter, we are going to look at Benbihy’s assignment that created *Paris, je t’aime* and what it tells about us about him, as well as some potential assignments that utilize “Quartier de la Madeleine” and what these say about us.

The *Paris, je t’aime* Assignment

When Benbihy set out to recruit the greatest auteurs of our time to participate in his film, he charged each of these directors with an assignment. Although each film is different, they all follow certain rules, and we can evaluate every film in *Paris, je t’aime* against these rules. Ben Rock of *Creative Screenwriting* describes Benbihy’s assignment as follows:

Each filmmaker was given four strict parameters: a specific arrondissement, a two-day shooting schedule, two actors, and a maximum running time of five minutes. And, as the anthology's title might imply, each film had to be about love, in any way the individual filmmaker wished to interpret it. (28)

If you have the class time, consider screening several or even all of the shorts in *Paris, je t'aime* and have your students evaluate the quality of the product in relation to the assignment. Although it is difficult to gauge the shooting schedule, it would be worth the conversation to discuss the films that feature more or less actors, the films that go too long or short, and how well a film focuses on love. By exploring how assignments often have both tangible measurements (such as length) and abstract measurements (such as engagement with the topic of love), we can address the objective and subjective qualities of grading and assessment. In addition, evaluating the films in *Paris, je t'aime* against Benbihy's assignment will underscore how different viewers evaluate the same film using the same criteria and can still come up with vastly different interpretations.

Armed with a better understanding of these films and what inspired them, we will use Benbihy's assignment to compose our first class assignment. We are going to offer our students 48 hours to draft a two-page creative writing narrative set in Paris, starring two actors, about love. Be sure to underscore this focus on love, as this will be the thesis for the work. This simple assignment will achieve several initial goals for our students: First, this assignment gives our students a chance to begin getting

comfortable writing in our class. Second, it familiarizes our students with our assignments, our expectations, and even the way we grade. Third, it prepares our students to understand more critically the mindset of the various directors involved in *Paris, je t'aime*. This assignment also allows us to begin understanding the strengths and weaknesses of our students so that we can better shape the remainder of the semester to teach composition more effectively.

This lesson is most handy for an initial rhetoric and composition course, but we can easily modify it for research methods. If one of your pedagogical goals is to just get your students familiar with doing research, consider assigning particular parts of Paris, and having your students research a specific location to set their story. For example, perhaps one student will compose a story of romantic love in a famous hotel, while another student might write of esoteric love in a Parisian café. Similarly, students could research their actors to really understand their casting decisions. Obviously, with any research component, you should allow more time to complete the assignment.

In this section, we looked at Benbihi's assignment that inspired the 18 films in *Paris, je t'aime*. By imagining that Benbihi selected our students to create films for his anthology, we help students understand the moment and conditions that created this film and all the parts in it. Now that our students understand this

collection and the assignment that inspired it, we will spend the rest of this chapter looking at other writing assignments that “Quartier de la Madeline” could inspire.

Corrigan’s Common Film Assignments

As Adams and Kline highlight about students, “Whereas their response to an essay often seems, at best a poor reiteration—if not outright plagiarism—their responses to film has the freshness of an original statement” (260). *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, by professor Timothy Corrigan, is an amazing textbook that bridges the gap between watching a film and writing about it. If you ever wanted your students to write a paper on a movie, read this book. Presuming that you want your students to write a paper on a film, we are going to use the assignments that Corrigan discusses to shape this section. In his *Short Guide*, Corrigan offers four types of writing assignments: the screening report, the movie review, the theoretical essay, and the critical essay. The screening report and theoretical essay are primarily for dedicated film students, so we will just be looking at the movie review and the critical essay.

The Movie Review

Movie reviews, are the type of movie writing that students are most familiar with. In addition, because movie reviews are so subjective, they are really fun to

write. However, reviews are often too focused on summary and opinion to be truly scholarly, while also being too easy to plagiarize. Instead of ignoring the review, use this genre to foster a discussion on its conventions and form. Also, take this opportunity to discuss academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Although students are likely to be very familiar with this type of writing, remind them that a good movie review, in addition to offering an opinion on a particular film, also offers summary of the film and context that connects this film and the people involved to other works. Reviews also explore the criteria for a film's genre and explore how well a film fits into a particular type. For example, when students write on "Quartier de la Madeleine," have them mention other movies that star Wood, such as *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* or *Sin City*, and/or other vampire works like *Dracula* or *Twilight*.

Although movie reviews are very commonplace, I strongly suggest offering a class to explore what constitutes the movie review genre. Since we are having students create written movie reviews, I suggest that you gather samples from various newspapers and magazines.⁴ Have your students look at these samples and note how

⁴ If you want to offer multimedia alternatives to the written movie review, consider radio and television movie reviews, and how different media affects the way reviewers comment on a particular film. This lesson might be particularly revealing if you have the same reviewer commenting on the same movie but in two different forms, such as Roger Ebert's review in the *Chicago Sun Times* compared to his review in *At the Movies*.

local and national periodicals talk differently about the same film.⁵ Ensure that students pay special attention to any assessment system, such as two thumbs up or five stars: What do these systems mean and what do they tell us about a particular film? As a class, come to a consensus as to what makes an effective review. We will use these parameters throughout the following assignments.

Armed with what a movie review is, immediately after you have screened “Quartier de la Madeleine,” have your students take ten minutes and free write a movie review on it. Although it is possible to let each student emulate a particular type of movie review, we will be able to more effectively compare the subjectivity of movie reviews if all students use the same criteria.

Composing movie reviews will accomplish a few things: First, all of your students have ideas, but if you leap right into group discussion, these students will have to explain and defend their comments on the fly. By forcing students to write their ideas down, we insist that they actually think their ideas through. Second, when you start a discussion, students who have written their thoughts down will be more prepared to offer perspectives and alternatives. Third, this mini-lesson will start to show that, although movie reviews are wonderful, they are often too full of unsupported opinion and summary to be suitable for the composition classroom.

⁵ Ideally, your school has a student newspaper with movie reviews. How interesting would it be to see how student journalists, peers to your students, comment on films?

Fourth, this in-class movie review should illustrate how a room full of students can all look at the same work and assess it with the same criteria and still come up with vastly different evaluations.⁶ However, a little in-class movie review may not fully convey these ideas.

One of the main aspects of a movie review is the perception of an audience that is unaware of the particular film under discussion. Movie reviewers often write to either encourage or discourage the viewing of a particular film. If our students think that their audience has never seen the movie they are talking about, these students will spend most of the time trying to connect a film with this audience. They will discuss their selected film in terms of other movies in the same genre and/or other works that the actors have also been involved in; building on this knowledge, these students will then offer extensive summary of their selected films. The issue is that none of these aspects displays our students' analytical abilities.

Although it is possible to make a movie review into an academic assignment, the biggest issue with any review is the temptation of plagiarism. It is just too easy for students to get their hands on professionally written movie reviews on nearly any movie. Take for example the following review:

Elijah Wood is chased by a beautiful vampire through darkened Parisian streets in dialogue-free "Quartier de la Madeleine," by Canadian writer-director Vincenzo Natali. Natali, the filmmaker

⁶ Here is a wonderful opportunity to discuss the subjective nature of grading.

behind the mind-bending cult classic *Cube*, contributed this cartoon-like vampire-lovers sketch to the collection *Paris, Je T'Aime*. “Quartier de la Madeleine” observes a creepy and very bloody romance that transpires between a young backpacker and a female vampire whom he encounters late one night.

It seems legitimate enough until you realize that I Frankensteined this entire review from five different sources. The beginning is from Rock’s *Creative Screenwriting* article, both references to the title “Quartier de la Madeleine” are from Lisa Nesselson’s piece in *Daily Variety*, the first bit about Natali is from *Wikipedia*, the “cartoon-like vampire-lovers sketch” part is from Chris Darke’s work in *Sight & Sound*, while the rest is from Matthew Tobey’s review from *AllMovie*. I did not add a single word nor did I change any punctuation. Moreover, remember that these are just sources that specifically talk about the “Quartier de la Madeleine” part of *Paris, je t’aime*. Imagine how easy it would be to splice together a full-length review on any full-length movie.

Instead of avoiding the movie review because of the risk of plagiarism, embrace it. Have your students try it out for themselves. After they have selected a film they wish to write on, have the students compose a plagiarized movie review. This pre-assignment fulfills a couple pedagogical goals: First, it starts an important discussion about plagiarism and allows us to highlight some of the tools that we have against this type of academic dishonesty. Second, it allows students to begin to locate sources and begin to notice how various voices comment on the same film. Because

this is not a traditional writing assignment, we will have to grade it a little differently: Instead of focusing on the words, we will grade on cohesion and organization. The best quality plagiarized movie review will synthesize several secondary sources, both scholarly and commonplace, into a unified work that reflects on the student's ability to follow directions.

When students first enter a class that uses film, they will likely default to believing that the only type of film writing is a movie review. As we discussed, movie reviews do have their place, but not often in an academic environment. Once our students understand why a movie review will not work in the composition classroom, we will be able to go on to truly academic film writing, the critical essay.

The Critical Essay

The critical essay is the perfect assignment for a composition course. Unlike the more journalistic movie review, the critical essay is truly an academic work. In addition, unlike the theoretical essay, the critical essay does not insist that students have extensive movie knowledge. While the movie review contends that a writer place a work in the context of a film genre and/or the other works of cast and crew, and the theoretical essay asserts the writer understand advanced film theory and technique, a critical essay focuses solely on the film itself.

When we talked about movie reviews, we discussed how reviewers write to an audience who has not seen a particular film, but now imagine that our students are writing to an audience that is familiar with it. These same students can no longer review the film, but instead have to analyze it. In addition, students—no longer compelled to explain the entire narrative—focus on particularly meaningful moments in the film. This distinction may seem trivial, but insisting that our students write to an informed audience more often than not creates fundamentally better student essays.

Unlike a movie review where the goal is to offer an overview of an entire film, students need to focus their critical essays. Films are hours long and scholars have written entire books on many movies. Our students are not going to be composing books, but essays. For a critical essay assignment, have your students choose a specific aspect of their selected film: a scene, a motif, a character, etc. By forcing our students to center their topic, they will be able to tackle a topic that will be appropriate for the length of a composition assignment.

The critical essay meets many pedagogical goals in the composition classroom. First, this assignment gets our students away from simple summary, asking our students to use textual evidence to make thoughtful claims about a particular work. Second, it insists students offer thoughtful analysis, explaining why this student came up with a particular reading. This assignment is ideal for the

rhetoric classroom but can easily accommodate a research component. In a course on rhetoric, I suggest treating the critical essay as a *new critic* essay—by this I mean a close reading—where the focus is solely on the selected film; however, in the research classroom, I would suggest that students further their understanding of a particular work by consulting the academic literature on their film.⁷

Just looking at a work like “Quartier de la Madeleine,” a number of critical essay topics come to mind. For example, the first student could write a paper entirely on the casting of Craven as the vampire’s victim.⁸ The second student could explore why the vampire decides not to feast on the tourist.⁹ The third student could discuss the absence of sound in this film and its other connections to the silent era. The fourth student could analyze the text to unpack Natali’s definition of love, a topic that would make for one more assignment type.

⁷ Many students want to write on movies that just came out in theaters. The issue is that these films are too new for scholars to have written about them (beyond movie reviews). As such, you may have to insist that students choose a classic movie or consult scholarly journals *before* selecting a film to analyze.

⁸ An idea discussed at length under “Ethos” in chapter four.

⁹ A thought explored in “Toulmin” also in chapter four.

The Definition Essay

For those of us who do not want just essays on films, the great opportunity with “Quartier de la Madeleine” and the rest of *Paris, je t’aime* is that each of these, in its own metaphorical way, is a definition of love. In many of the shorts, directors advocate that love is the new attraction—the spark—between two people, despite barriers like language and culture. However, in one *Paris, je t’aime* short, love is saying goodbye to an ex-spouse. In another, love is a daughter trusting her father with her baby. In a third, a mother having one more moment with her dead son is the greatest expression of love. In the last film, love is between a letter carrier from Denver and the whole city of Paris. Each of these and all the rest in the series define love in a unique way.

For this assignment, we are going to have our students define love. What is love? Who has love? What does it look like? What does it feel like? How can someone tell if he or she is in love? How can someone tell when another is in love? The first part of this assignment is to say what love is and actually define this term. Defining love can be very difficult; however, by having our students intelligently engage in language and concretely define exactly what they mean when they use the term “love,” we will be achieving many pedagogical goals: First, we encourage these students to comment on their own discourse. Second, as students continue their collegiate careers, more of their professors will expect explicit operational definitions

of key terms. Third, many students believe that their arguments are blatantly self-evident, but by expecting them to overtly say what they are trying to express, we are encouraging our students to ensure that they are actually saying what they are trying to say.

The second part, though, is to compose a metaphorical representation of love. This aspect will address many of our students' protests that so much of love is ineffable. By allowing them the chance to explore love through metaphor, simile, and analogy, not only will we be having our students refine and develop style within their writing, but also this part of the work will be similar to the metaphorical vignettes in *Paris, je t'aime*. This part of the definition assignment is a great opportunity to build off our students' responses to the Benbihy's *Paris, je t'aime* assignment we explored at the beginning of this chapter. While earlier we simply expected our students to write a love story, we can now insist these students flesh out their ideas and explain *why* the narratives they have constructed define love. Through careful analysis, our students will not only better understand the definition of love, but also they will better understand themselves.

In this chapter, we looked at several assignments relating to "Quartier de la Madeleine" and *Paris, je t'aime*, from Benbihy's assignment to movie reviews, critical essays to definition essays. When we first offer an assignment, it is a sound pedagogical idea to allow our students an opportunity to flesh out their own thoughts

on the topic. This is why it is such a good idea to offer our students Benbihiy's assignment before screening any of the *Paris, je t'aime* films. Once our students have decided what part of Paris to set their story and who they wish could star in it and, most importantly, what is their own definition of love, then we can offer Natali's take on love—as well as potentially others in this collection. At this point, our students are joining the conversation on love. They will now be able to understand the multidimensionality of this topic and how 18 filmmakers from around the world as well as all of their classmates come up with a different definition of love. Some will be similar, while others will be unique—much like Natali's vampire love story.

Our students experience something similar in Corrigan's critical essay assignment. When we first offer the assignment, it is all about the student and his or her understanding of an aspect of a film. In the fashion of the new critics, this student acts as if he or she is the first to ever talk about this particular film. However, once students have fleshed out their ideas, it is time to find out what others have written on the same subject. Has anyone else ever noted the same element that the student has focused on and why is this aspect so profound? What other parts have scholars looked at with this particular film? Once students have joined in the academic conversation, they get to see where they fit into to the bigger picture. Sometimes students even get to see how their unique voice contributes to the greater discourse. To help these students maximize these assignments, in the next chapter, we move on to the

organization and structure of an academic essay and how these can parallel the parts of films.

CHAPTER 3

ORGANIZATION & STRUCTURE

We scholars seem to really like being able to divide a particular work into discrete parts. For example, a movie often has a beginning, middle, and end, while an essay often has an introduction, body, and conclusion. The three-part work is a common organizational structure; however, a work does not have to have these elements and if it does have these elements, they do not have to be in this order.

As an example, let us look at this guide. I could have put the different parts of this handbook together in any order I chose. I could have made this work purely chronological or topical or even just random. Furthermore, I could have organized individual paragraphs in many different ways. For the overall organization of the guide, I ultimately decided to put it together first by category (which became my chapters) and then by when I would teach what aspect first. I introduce this guide, offer assignments related to it, explore the structure in “Quartier de la Madeleine,” unpack the rhetorical arguments at work, and discuss how a work changes over time. (Looking at the paragraph level, I tried extensively to offer an abstract composition concept, explore how this concept appears in “Quartier de la Madeleine,” and offer suggestions on how to elicit this idea in our students’ papers.) You are absolutely welcome and even encouraged to teach this guide in this order; however, since each

part is a discrete unit in itself, you can teach any or all of it in any manner you choose.

Use my discussion of organization to help your students understand the various ways that they can compose their essays. Consider “Quartier de la Madeleine,” which has a chronological organization, from the perspective of the protagonist. Although this is a very natural way of constructing a movie, it is by no means the only option.¹⁰ Natali could have just as easily started the tourist being reborn as a vampire; in this version, the entire story would be his flashback of how he got to this point.¹¹ In another version of this same story, Natali could have followed each character, explaining how they all met in that particular corner of the Quartier de la Madeleine. Our students have similar decisions to make regarding how they synthesize their papers. Similar to what we discussed in chapter five, have your students reverse outline to explore some different options to how they want to construct their essays. Have these conversations with your students and substantively improved papers will be your reward.

¹⁰ If you have the time and energy, it would be very telling to actually re-cut “Quartier de la Madeleine” to *show* some of the alternative organizational possibilities.

¹¹ How great would it be if Natali started with the tourist bleeding out from his head wound! In this version, it would appear as if the vampire would be explaining to the amnesiac tourist the events that led up to him falling down the stairs.

Natali's film does have three discrete parts that follow a chronological order. In this chapter, we are going to talk about these parts and look at what they are and what each one does. We will also explore how these parts could parallel our students' papers. In the second chapter, we fully screened "Quartier de la Madeleine," but in this chapter, we are going to look at each part of this film in isolation. First, we will look at the beginning and how it is quite similar to an introduction. Second, we will examine the middle and how it relates to the body of a paper. Third, we will explore the ending and what this says about conclusions.¹²

The Introduction

How does "Quartier de la Madeleine" begin? When exactly does the film start and at what point has the beginning ended and the middle began? What does this beginning tell us about the film and about the character? Furthermore, what does Natali's work tell us about the story that is about to unfold and the setting in which it

¹² However, perhaps the ideal way to teach "Organization & Structure" though is to actually break Natali's film into three discrete parts and to screen each of these parts by itself followed by a discussion of what a given part is doing and what makes this part distinct from the other two. By screening the beginning in a vacuum, our students will be able to form an opinion about the value and purpose of introductions before the rest of the film biases them. This works similarly for the middle of "Quartier de la Madeleine," where our students can make comments about vampires and the death of the tourist, before being influenced by Natali's twist ending.

takes place? Good introductions are like good hosts inviting their guests inside.

Natali's introduction intrigues us to join the tourist and follow him up the stairs.

First, let us establish the scope of the introduction. "Quartier de la Madeleine" begins at the very start of the 15th chapter of the *Paris, je t'aime* DVD—one hour, 17 minutes, and 27 seconds into the film. Some viewers may say that the film starts with the iris-in on the tourist, but this is actually when the narrative starts. The very beginning of the film shows an establishing shot looking down the street, which dead ends in a traffic light in front of an ominous building. After this establishing shot, there are two more (the last of which offering the film's title and director), then a fade-to-black with the words "*Tard dans la nuit...*" and a long take of the tourist walking up the stairs, lost and alone. In this six-minute short, the entire introduction lasts for one minute and six seconds.

"Quartier de la Madeleine" begins with three exterior shots of Parisian streets at night. What do these snapshots tell us? Each shot is dark and urban. These are the lonely streets of Paris illuminated by the glow of street lamps. Furthermore, while there is a single moving car and the silhouette of a living person, these two are only in the first shot and they are otherwise alone.¹³ The next two shots are empty of movement. In the last shot, the cars are all parked in a row while their drivers have

¹³ The solitary figure walking along the street and the single car that passes by recall Natali's original storyboard, which is discussed at length in chapter five under "Revision: To See It Again."

turned in for the night. In three quick shots, Natali has told us that his narrative will take place late at night in the deserted streets of an urban landscape. Establishing where events are occurring can be just as important to an essay as it is a film. Often our students try to tackle global issues, little realizing that a 3-5 page assignment only allows so much breadth and depth. As such, use “Quartier de la Madeleine” as an example of how to focus a work.

Unlike feature-length films like *Dracula* and *Twilight*, “Quartier de la Madeleine” is a short film.¹⁴ Natali says, “I think I’ve had a hard time conceiving of a feature length film because there are so many vampire films already and I wouldn’t want to do one in that format unless I had something new to say or do with it” (“Quartier de la Madeleine” behind-the-scenes featurette). Here Natali realizes his own limitations. He desired to create a film in this genre—to join the discourse—but was prescient enough to know that he did not have an original full-length film to offer. Similarly, our students may nobly want to use their assignments to cure AIDS and stop killers, but can only achieve so much in a handful of pages. Instead of tackling global issues, help your students refine their topic to the scope of the assignment. As such, they will still be participating in the discourse that they wanted,

¹⁴ The status of “Quartier de la Madeleine” as a short work—as part of a larger whole—is underscored in print by it being placed inside quotations rather than being an italicized work.

but rather than a superficial overview, they will really sink their teeth into their topic. One of the easiest ways to limit the scope of an assignment is to narrow its location.

Natali could have set his vampire narrative anywhere; what does this setting bring to the film? How would this film be different if set in London, New York, Los Angeles, Sydney, Tokyo, or Bangkok? What makes “Quartier de la Madeleine” both a uniquely Parisian film and an international work? By encouraging our students to consider the scope of their essay, they will understand that their essay could shape up differently if set in another city or another country. Students often implicitly compose their papers around their city; little realizing that transporting their research question to another locale can fundamentally shift or even negate their work.

The last shot in the series offers up two more pieces of the story, the title of the film and the director. These are two imperative elements of any work: What is a work called and who created it? We often easily overlook these aspects, but they contextualize the entire piece. A **title** is a word or phrase that tries to get a potential audience interested enough to explore a work further. The title is probably the least utilized aspect of most of the papers students submit to me. Students often simply use the assignment as a title. Discuss this idea with your class. Ask you students what if Natali titled his film “*Paris, je t’aime* Short Film” or “My 8th Arrondissement Movie.” I hope that some of your class will laugh, because most of us have turned in an assignment with a vague, nondescript title like these. Instead, Natali called this

film “Quartier de la Madeleine.” The good thing about this title is that it tells the audience something that they would not likely have otherwise known: the specific location of this particular back alley where the movie is set. A good title should do something like that: It should tell the audience a little something extra. In this case (as well as the rest of *Paris, je t’aime*), the title tells the audience where the film that is about to begin is going to take place.

Every paper that our students are going to write needs a title and the name of the author, just like every film needs a title and the name of its *auteur*—its director. While the name part is obvious to most students, I still receive one or more papers a semester with no name attached. This is a great opportunity to tell your students that if they want to do well in your class, they need to put their name on every assignment. The title, the director, and this last establishing shot then fade to black.

The words “*Tard dans la nuit...*” (“Late at night...”) appear in white letters. These words are Natali’s hook. A **hook** is a device at the beginning of a work designed to draw an audience in. In this case, Natali is trying to conjure up the mysteries of the dead of night. Natali wants us to think about what terrifying and exciting events happen in the wee hours while we are safely asleep in bed. I admit that this hook is a bit cliché, but use this opportunity to talk to students about what “late at night” means to them. Do they talk about drinking? Having sex? Being afraid of monsters and murderers? If so, all of these late night ideas tie into Natali’s film.

Explain to your students the value and importance of a hook and why each of their papers should have this device, and—like our discussion of vague titles earlier—take some time to talk about clichéd hooks verses effective hooks.¹⁵ A hook is something that captures the audience’s attention and lures them into your work. Natali had his title work in tandem with his hook: The title told us where the story takes place and the hook tells us when these events occurred.

Finally, after all of this groundwork, the film’s narrative begins with a circular hole into the filmic world. This opening is very telling. A circular orifice forming on a blackened screen is called an iris, which is an archaic editing device used primarily during the silent era. By opening his film with an iris in, Natali is aligning himself with films from this time. However, this film is clearly in color and not the signature black and white film stock of the silent era. As such, instead of being a strictly silent film, “Quartier de la Madeleine” is a post-silent era homage. Without alienating the rest of his audience, Natali communicates to fans of this bygone era that his film is descended from these works. Sometimes we are lucky enough to have students who insert these nods to other works into their papers, a comment from them to us that adds another layer to their work.

¹⁵ Perhaps even take some class time to hypothesize a better hook for “Quartier de la Madeleine” and connect this to the revision process in chapter five.

The first thing the iris reveals is the word “Paris” upon a map. This prop—like the title—tells us where these events are occurring, but this map also tells us something about the person holding it: That he is a tourist. In addition, the map also reveals that this tourist is lost in the darkened back alleys of Paris. These details are an important aspect for an introduction. They are **background** that tell us who, where, and when. This scene continues in a long take until the tourist reaches the top of the stairs where the camera cuts to being in front of the tourist. This cut is the end of the beginning and the start of the middle of this film.

What have we learned from this introduction? We know that Natali authored this piece. The hook “Tard dans la nuit...” establishes that this story is happening late at night somewhere. We learned from the title that this story is taking place in the urban streets of “Quartier de la Madeleine,” which we discerned from the iris-in is part of the city of Paris. The iris-in itself tells us that this film is akin to movies of the silent era. Moreover, the story focuses on a tourist who finds himself lost and alone.

These elements are similar to those that our students should consider including in their introductions. They ought to have a title that is interesting enough to get their audience to look at their work, while revealing something about the work itself. Our students should begin their introduction with a hook that draws their readers in. The one thing that our students’ introductions need is essential background that will allow us to understand the rest of their argument.

However, as aspect that the introduction to “Quartier de la Madeleine” is missing, which we often expect in our students’ introductions, is an overt thesis. There is clearly a thesis at work in “Quartier de la Madeleine,” but due to its narrative structure and silent film conventions, Natali’s thesis here appears in the *conclusion*, where he implies rather than explicitly states it.¹⁶ Whether implied or explicit, too often our students are not certain what the central thesis of their work is. Instead of forming a thesis first and drafting from this argument, students simply start with the first line of their introduction and write consecutively until the very last sentence of the conclusion. The reason that this is such an issue is that too often students are not entirely sure what they want to write until several paragraphs into their work, and since too few students revise their work, we receive papers that are terrible for the first page or so but get better as the student focuses his or her argument.

Imagine if Natali filmed “Quartier de la Madeleine” like this. Say he just went to the eighth arrondissement of Paris and just started haphazardly filming. First he shoots the *Champs-Élysées*, and then perhaps on to the *Arc de Triomphe*. As he films, Natali would eventually be drawn to Quartier de la Madeleine where he would be inspired to tell the vampire story he had wanted to tell since he was a child, but by that point he has wasted so much time and film. Instead of filming in this chaotic way, Natali composed a plan—a working thesis. He then used this idea to shape what

¹⁶ We will explore Natali’s thesis in greater depth below.

he filmed. As we will talk about in chapter five, details of this thesis evolved and changed, but the core vampire narrative is still the idea he set out to tell. As such, the best advice we can offer our students is to compose a working thesis, and use aspects of this thesis to compose body paragraphs, perhaps writing the final version of this thesis *after* they have composed the body of their work.

The Body

Now that our readers are drawn into the work, now that they have the background to understand what they will see or read (including where the events are taking place and who the players are), now what do we do? After we have our audience's attention, we need to tell them why we wanted their attention in the first place. The core of an argument is the body of our work. In the body, we offer our ideas, just like in the middle of a movie the action develops.

While in the beginning, the tourist was lost and alone, in the middle of this narrative, the tourist discovers something worse than just being lost and alone. The middle of "Quartier de la Madeleine" starts immediately after the tourist ascends the stairs and discovers the blood. Before, the tourist was casually walking along, but when he happens upon the blood, he realizes something is terribly wrong. The blood here is a transition. **Transitions** unite two separate parts, bridging one idea to the next. In this case, we have the tourist walking along and then he steps in something,

which happens to be blood that the vampire is feasting on just out of sight. Since tourists often walk all over the city they visit, it is perfectly natural to have a tourist who is walking along step in something. The tourist could have stepped into anything, but Natali has his tourist happen upon blood ... a lot of blood. Between the mysterious setting and the lone scream, we know that something is amiss, but the blood here forecasts the vampire entering the story. Like Natali using the blood to segue from a mystery into a horror, our students should use transitions throughout the body of their work to create cohesion among the different elements of their argument. Sometimes our students' paragraphs will flow together—bleed together if you will—so well that transitions are natural and obvious. However, more often, we will need to encourage our students to bridge their ideas and create transitional statements that bring unity and cohesion to their work.

Now that Natali has transitioned his tale to a vampire horror story, he spends the remainder of the work playing with vampiric conventions. At first, the tourist watches the vampire in horrified awe, accidentally making a noise and revealing his hiding space. The vampire vanishes but then pounces upon the tourist. Expecting death, the tourist braces himself ... but the vampire decides to not kill him. She curiously looks at the tourist and gets up to leave. Initially elated to be alive, the tourist quickly feels rejected. Trying to tempt her back, the tourist slits his wrist, but the vampire shakes her head and disappears into the darkness. Losing a lot of his own

blood, the tourist inadvertently slips on the victim's blood from the start of this section. He falls back down the stairs toward his death. The tourist crashing down the stairs signals the end of the middle.

An interesting aspect of Natali's organization is that the middle has come full circle. The tourist first stumbled upon the victim's blood setting events in motion, and now at the end of the middle the tourist stumbles on this very blood. The blood, a symbol of the death of the victim, is the catalyst that causes the death of the tourist. Similarly, at the beginning of the middle the tourist finished ascending the stairs, while at the end of the middle the tourist violently descends these same stairs. By starting with an element and returning to this same element, Natali gives the middle **bookends**, which are excellent devices to bring cohesiveness and closure to a work. Although our students could bookend the body of their writing, they will more often use this technique in the introduction and conclusion to bring unity to the entire work, not just a section.

At the end of the middle, the tourist plummeted down the stairs. The story could legitimately end here with the death of the tourist; however, there would be no meaning and no purpose in the story. If the tourist were to die here, there would be no closure just meaningless finality. Remember that this is part of *Paris, je t'aime*, so where is the love? Instead of ending the story here, Natali offers a conclusion.

The Conclusion

What is a conclusion? The conclusion ties the work together; it brings completion and cohesiveness to the whole work. While the introduction and body offer the importance of an issue, conclusions sometimes call for the readers to take a specific action. The conclusion is quite often the most important part of a work, giving meaning and purpose to the entire thing. The introduction captivates the audience, the body offers various aspects of an idea, but the conclusion unifies everything. Conclusions also often apply the specific argument of a work and globalize it to a larger situation, suggesting further implications beyond the scope of the work. While papers have conclusions, films have endings.

A narrative ending can be very different from a conclusion. Endings, especially classical-Hollywood-cinema-style happy endings, typically strive for closure because narratives are primarily character based. Narratives have character arcs where we watch a character grow and change. In a happy ending, the protagonist has achieved a purpose (the protagonist is often a male, and his happy ending is getting the girl). While our students' essays do not follow a character arc that leads to an ending, the arguments that they create do evolve and grow, which ultimately leads to a greater purpose in the conclusion. Therefore, argumentative conclusions and narrative endings are in many ways more similar than different.

At the start of the ending, the tourist is lying beneath the steps, bleeding out and dying. This fate is perfect for the tourist: he sought death (albeit from the lovely vampire) and he is now dying. The vampire reappears and comes down the stairs. Vampires are the harbingers of death; therefore, little to no danger to a dying man; however, Natali inverts the vampire mythology here making her more akin to a guardian angel descending from heaven to save the tourist rather than a blood-drinking demon feasting upon a dying man. Instead of damnation, she is salvation. At the end of the film, the lonely tourist has found another, a companion. He is no longer alone and he is no longer lost. The tourist has found companionship and his place in the world. Natali's film not only offers meaning to the tourist, but also offers meaning to the viewers. For the same reason, a conclusion brings meaning and cohesion to a paper. Good conclusions (and introductions)—both in good films and good essays—often answer that “so what” question and giving us that closure we want both as viewers and teachers.

The meaning and cohesion here is the film's thesis. A **thesis** is an argument that sums up the purpose and point of a particular piece. That argumentative aspect is important. A thesis is not simply a super small summary, but is instead the central claim of a work that the rest will explain and elaborate. A thesis is an intimidating term, but it actually comes quite easy. Say you were to ask me what this handbook is all about. I would respond that my book is a guide that shows how to use “Quartier de

la Madeleine” to teach many of the fundamentals of composition. More or less, that is my thesis for my (master’s) thesis. The thesis in “Quartier de la Madeleine” actually occurs in the last shot of the film, but to understand Natali’s thesis, we need to address two questions: Since it is not explicitly stated, what is Natali’s thesis and why does it occur at the end of the film?

An explicit thesis works fine in most academic writing but would not work in a fictional piece like “Quartier de la Madeleine.” For fictional works (as well as many academic works from other countries), the audience has to infer the thesis. Remember that each film in *Paris, je t’aime* is a response to Benbihiy’s assignment to tell a short love story.¹⁷ Obviously, Natali is commenting on love, but what is he saying about it? Is Natali saying that love is the tourist’s attraction to something sexy though deadly? Is he advocating that love is the vampire resisting her animalistic desire to devour the tourist? Is love offering your very life’s blood to the person you desire, or is it saving someone’s life by nursing him back after he has hurt himself? Is love both consuming the person that you desire and reciprocally being consumed by that person? Ask your students what they believe is Natali’s thesis.

It may seem unnatural to wait until the conclusion to offer a thesis, but this rhetorical choice actually exists in many forms of writing. For example, in an editorial, we will establish all of our background and body points before offering a

¹⁷ For more on this, read “The *Paris, je t’aime* assignment” in chapter two.

uniting thesis in the conclusion. In a lab report or case study, the writer may allude to the thesis in the abstract, but will not actually fully explain his or her thesis until the conclusion section. Similarly, in a business letter, we will establish all relevant information and then offer a call-to-action (the business equivalent of a thesis) in the last paragraph. Establishing all the aspects of an argument before overtly offering the thesis is actually common in academia.

Perhaps saving a unifying thesis for the very end of a work is not such a bad idea. Connors offers, “the writer does not have to restate the thesis three times so that it may be grasped by readers; a written essay often speaks its piece but once, and after that, the responsibility for analysis and understanding rests on the reader” (289). A major issue that students face when trying to compose their conclusions is that they feel they have nothing else to say after having composed the bodies and introductions of their works. Furthermore, by the time many have finished writing page after page on their subject, students often are spent and simply rush the conclusion to be finished. Although these concerns are understandable, we need to explain to our students that the conclusion is likely the most important part of their work, and that the conclusion will likely be the one part of their paper that their readers remember most.

Conclusions, like this one, need to be profound. The final scene of the ending in “Quartier de la Madeleine” shows the two vampires feasting on one another’s

blood. Although unlikely to be similar to anything that our students write in response to the *Paris, je t'aime* pre-assignment, who is to say that Natali's version of love—what he calls “My worst desires”—is not as insightful and apt as anyone else's interpretation (“Quartier de la Madeleine” behind the scenes featurette)? Leaving our readers with this kind of understanding is the stuff that makes up good conclusions. Furthermore, by utilizing the heart-out to end his work, Natali is again bookending his work. Natali's narrative started with an iris-in inviting us into his cinematic vision and at the end of this piece we leave in the same manner, albeit through a heart-shaped iris-out.

The film is ending and this chapter is concluding. In this chapter, we have unpacked the parts of a film and how these parallel the parts of our students' essays. Our students can use this knowledge to strengthen their assignment and create cohesive works with introductions, bodies, and conclusions; however, you can also use this opportunity to explore alternative organizational patterns. For example, while we may believe a thesis should be in the introduction, who is to say that our students could not compose a better work by constructing a paper that builds to a thesis within the conclusion? As long as our students thoughtfully revise these papers, cutting out any wandering tangents, they could be just as effective as conventional essays but perhaps more engaging, like a mystery. Armed with the form and structure, we move on to how to recognize an argument and how to make one of our own.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING AN ARGUMENT

Argument has such a nasty reputation. When we ask our students what is an argument, what do they say? Is an argument a verbal fight? Is it shouting at someone? There is an aspect of conflict that does exist in argument, mostly because an **argument** is advocating a position on a subject; however, an argument does not need to be loud nor violent. To make an argument, our students simply have to examine a multi-sided issue and advocate for a particular position. Some may argue that everything is an argument, but in this chapter, we are going to focus on the Aristotelian appeals, the Toulmin method, and Rogerian argument in Natali's film and how our students can apply these into their papers.

Aristotelian Argument

Now that our students have an argumentative thesis statement, how do they make it persuasive to an audience? The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle set forth three elements in the art of rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos. James Kinneavy writes in his *Theory of Discourse* that:

[Ethos] focuses on the author, the attractiveness of the character and the authority the author inspires; pathos involves the audience, especially the emotions of the audience; and logos involves references to the world ("reality") shared by the author and audience. (qtd. in Killingsworth 251).

In this section, we are going to look at each of these and how they manifest in “Quartier de la Madeleine” and how our students can use these appeals in their writing.

Ethos

When people talk about a movie, what is the first question someone usually asks? “Who is in it?” We are so caught up in the actors of film that their daily lives make up the core of our gossip. We see these actors in our favorite movies so often that we feel like we know them. Moreover, when one of these famous people tries to sell us some product, we listen to their authority.

Patricia Roberts offers, “The status of the speaker is not easily separable from the argument the speaker makes. Awareness of authority is not necessarily obedience to it, but the speaker’s ethos is necessarily a part of argumentation” (172). This appeal to someone’s authority is the essence **ethos**. Now Aristotle’s idea of ethos is far more complex than this simple reading. Ethos is context specific and as Terrence McLaughlin offers, it is intertwined with the ambience and atmosphere of the presentation, as well as influenced by the culture and ethics of the audience (308-9). Therefore, our ethos as teachers is meaningful here and now within our classroom. In a different time and space, we will have a different authority. We will explore various aspects, but it is essential for our discussion that ethos is “the way in which the rhetor

is perceived by the audience” (Connors 285). To understand why “Quartier de la Madeleine” and other works are effective, we need to consider the ethos of those involved in it.

Ask your students who plays the tourist in “Quartier de la Madeleine.” A lot of them will likely say that it is Elijah Wood, but I have had several students yell out “Frodo!” Although Wood has been in numerous movies, from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* to *Sin City*, he is best known for the lead role of Frodo Baggins in the epic *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Perhaps he is not in the same league as Brad Pitt, but Wood is definitely one of the most famous actors in the world. When we watch Wood’s tourist in the film, we bring everything we know about him to his role. This fame gives him his ethos.

Ask your students how the film would be different if another actor played the role of the tourist. How would the movie be different if Pitt played the tourist? What would Robert Pattinson bring to the role? What about Kiefer Sutherland? How about Kate Beckinsale or Aidan Turner? All actors bring with them everything that the audience knows about them: every role, every commercial, and every scandal. In addition, this ethos changes over time. Imagine how different the vampire would be played by Christopher Lee fresh from playing the lead in *Horror of Dracula* (1958) verses Lee fifty years later now that he has become iconic in fantasy and science

fiction, playing Saruman the White in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and Count Dooku in *The Star Wars* prequel trilogy (2002, 2005).

Perhaps it is easy to believe that movie stars are a relatively recent phenomenon; however, the star system began over a century ago in 1910 when IMP pictures hired a woman known only as the Biograph Girl and made her the first star, Florence Lawrence. A mere two years later, the first movie fan magazine, *Photoplay*, was on sale. The independent studios of this silent era realized the commodity of these actors and made them the selling point we still have today (Mast & Kavin 101). As film scholars Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis explain, the star system was “initially developed for marketing films by creating and promoting stars as objects of admiration. The promotion of stars has now become an end in itself” (437). This marketing tool has so permeated our every film-going experience that it is quite often the main point of discussion. All of which is ethos.

Like actors, authors have ethos. Think about famous authors like Bram Stoker, Anne Rice, and Stephanie Meyer. Ethos can even be context specific. For example, perhaps you have never heard of Mark Rein-Hagen, but I will bet anyone who has ever played *Vampire: the Masquerade* has. Similarly, although our students may not recognize an auteur like Natali, some of them have seen his full-length features *Cube* and *Splice*. However, Natali is not satisfied with the ethos he created from these

films. In “Quartier de la Madeleine,” Natali stakes his claim as the king of horror, and he does this through casting.

There is something unique about the victim in “Quartier de la Madeleine.” The actor who plays this part is none other than the legendary horror filmmaker Wes Craven! Through simply casting Craven as the victim, Natali has joined a running joke in horror that is almost as old as I am. It goes back to Steven Spielberg’s *Jaws* (1975), which is one of the archetypal horror movies. This film made going into the water a truly terrifying experience. To respond to its ethos, Craven included a torn up poster of *Jaws* in his film *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977). Building off *The Hills Have Eyes*, director Sam Raimi included a shredded *The Hills Have Eyes* poster in *The Evil Dead* (1981), explaining this motif as follows:

When we saw *The Hills Have Eyes*, Wes Craven’s great masterpiece of horror, we noticed within it that he had a *Jaws* poster that was ripped in half ... and we thought it meant to say, “Folks, *Jaws* was just pop horror. This is real terror.” So we put *The Hills Have Eyes* poster up on the wall and tore it in half ... we wanted to say, “No Wes, your picture is just pop horror, this is what it’s about.” (Raimi and Tapert)

Craven, in turn, responded to Raimi’s insult in his classic *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), where his protagonist, Nancy Thompson (Heather Langenkamp), falls asleep watching Raimi’s *The Evil Dead*—filmicly retorting that Raimi’s film is so boring and not scary that his character fell asleep to it. Shortly after Spielberg made a name for himself in the horror world, Craven built off Spielberg’s ethos. Then Raimi built

on Craven and Craven built on Raimi, each of them wanting to be the undisputed master of horror. This brings us to 2006 where Natali decides to join in and up the stakes even further. In “Quartier de la Madeleine,” Natali casts Craven as the vampire’s victim. Here Natali is filmicly killing him off, and taking up the crown as the supreme horror director, and continuing this joke.

Ethos is not limited to stars and writers (and directors vying to be the master of horror). Politicians and celebrities have ethos. You have a great deal of ethos over your students, and I have just enough ethos to persuade you to read this far into my guide. The important thing to remember is that the core of this Aristotelian appeal is in the authority. A star, a writer, the president, you, and I all have ethos that we use to appeal to an audience. One of the hardest ideas to convey to students is that they too have ethos. Teaching students to recognize ethos in others is the first step. After that, we simply need to encourage our students to write with authority. This concept is especially essential in research methods where students have so thoroughly researched a concept that they really are experts on the subject.

Pathos

Pathos is on the opposite extreme to ethos because, while ethos is in the author, pathos is elicited in the audience. **Pathos** is the appeal to emotion of the audience. That is not to say that someone with ethos cannot be emotional; we all can,

but unless our emotions elicit an emotional reaction in our audience we are not using pathos. The pathos in “Quartier de la Madeleine” is easy: this is a horror movie and as such, it is appealing to our emotion of fear. Horror is by its very definition a fearful emotional appeal. The cute protagonist is lost and alone, and since we too have felt lost and alone, we sympathize with the tourist. Furthermore, most of us have been afraid of what we might find feeding in the dark, so when the tourist encounters the vampire, we can empathize.

Film is an emotional medium. We seem biologically programmed to relate to the protagonist of a work, so through the close-up on the terrified tourist’s face we feel his fear. When the tourist looks toward the victim and sees the vampire is gone, we feel a sense of relief; however, when he turns around, the vampire is right there and we too jump with fright!¹⁸ “Quartier de la Madeleine” appeals to more; it is, after all, part of the *Paris, je t’aime* series. As such, this short also has a romantic appeal.

Although enigmatic through most the film, the upbeat music and heart-shaped iris-out while the vampires devour one another gives this tale of terror a romantic twist and the classic Hollywood cinema happy ending. This happy ending is a fundamental aspect of pathos, giving the audience closure and peace after the emotional rollercoaster of this movie.

¹⁸ Film scholars refer to this filmic technique as the false scare: The audience braces themselves to see something scary, which does not happen; however, then when the audience relaxes the scary thing pounces.

While our students compose their papers, ask them to consider the emotional effect their work may have on their audience. This idea may seem difficult at first, so ask your students to consider what draws them to a particular topic. We usually pick topics that we care about. When students are passionate about a subject, their writing is often better because their passion can spark passion in their readers. Also, as students compose their papers, have them consider the effect word choice can have on their writing. What kind of emotional reaction would Natali elicit if he called his protagonist a foreigner or stranger instead of a tourist? Although these words have similar denotation, the connotations are vastly different, and this difference causes an emotional reaction in the audience. This is the essence of pathos.

Logos

While ethos is within the author and pathos is in the audience, logos exists in the message. Because it is in the work, I often feel like logos is the hardest appeal to put my finger on. **Logos** is the logical appeal of a text, often manifesting as graphs and expert testimony. I can perceive the ethos of an actor/director/writer/etc., and I can sense the emotion a work is trying to elicit in me, but to succinctly see the logic that holds a work together is like looking behind the curtain and seeing the man making the magic. In this part, I am going to unpack some of the logos in “Quartier

de la Madeleine” and apply this to how our students can perceive logic and then create logical arguments.

The first aspect of logos appears at the very beginning of “Quartier de la Madeleine.” The establishing shots in this work established that everyone who lives in this neighborhood is safely elsewhere (most likely asleep in their beds at home). Not even animals venture here, sensing the ever-present danger. The deserted scene conveys the knowledge that this place is not safe at this time. The tourist is a foreigner, however, and does not know that he should not be out in these streets so late at night. Lost and alone, the tourist wanders around not knowing he is easy prey for the monster that stalks these streets. The logic is this: Those who live in the Quartier de la Madeleine know better than to be out at this hour. The young man is out in the streets at this hour, not knowing better; therefore, he does not live here and must be a visitor from elsewhere. Sound logical?

How about the scene where the tourist breaks the bottle and slashes his wrist, how could this moment be logical? The tourist tries to hide from the vampire, so he does not want to die.¹⁹ However, when the vampire leaves him alone, rather than savor this brush with death, the tourist slits his wrist and offers it to her. Does he want

¹⁹ Perhaps you and horror author Stephen King might argue that it is not that he does not want to die, it is that the tourist does not want to die a bad death. Rick Worland writes, “Horror in all periods has thrived on depictions of ‘bad deaths,’ the kind that make us dwell on physical agony” (8).

to die? No, but more than his will to survive, the tourist cannot accept the vampire's rejection. When he slits his wrist, the tourist simply wants another to desire him, even if he is being desired as a consumable object.²⁰ The logos would be something like this: She drinks blood. She rejects him because she does not perceive his blood. Therefore, if she sees/smells/tastes his blood, she will not reject him. Therefore, the tourist slitting his wrists makes some sense, but why does the vampire reject him in the first place?

Here is a moment where the logic seems to break down. The vampire, having cornered the tourist, goes in for the fatal bite ... but stops. She does not draw any blood, but just looks sadly at the tourist and leaves. The logic might look something like this: Vampires drink blood. This woman did not drink the tourist's blood. Therefore, she is not a vampire. However, because she drank the victim's blood and has fangs and moves incredibly fast, she must be a vampire. (We will explore this paradox further through the Toulmin method below.) For Aristotle, these logical deductions were his enthymemes; however, the best use of logos by our students can often be coming up with logical claims based on tangible evidence and supported through concrete warrants, an idea we will flesh out through the Toulmin model.

²⁰ Although it seems so strange to imagine, how often have any of us dressed up in scantily clad attire, to become desirable object for a potential mate. Being the object of desire is perhaps part of being alive.

The Toulmin Model

After you have screened “Quartier de la Madeleine” for your class, ask your students why the vampire did not drink the tourist’s blood when she had him cornered. You will likely get several answers, each of them an argument. We are going to use arguments like those your students may have come up with to diagram how each fits into the Toulmin model.

Stephen Toulmin is a British philosopher who advocated that an argument has several main aspects. The core of an argument is a **claim**. **Evidence** supports this claim.²¹ Claims and evidence are explicitly stated, but they rest upon often unspoken warrants. **Warrants** are shared beliefs, ideas, and values between an author and his/her audiences that make the evidence lead to the claim; without these warrants, the entire argument unravels. **Backing** then supports warrants. Claims are often not true in all cases, so **qualifiers** place limits on a claim’s scope. In addition, very often there is a **rebuttal**, which is an alternative claim that could be equally valid and needs addressing. To convey this idea to my students, I use conjunctions so that I get the phrase: Evidence *so* (qualified) claim *since* warrants *because* backing *unless* rebuttal.

Let us apply this Toulmin model to our initial question, why the vampire did not drink the tourist’s blood when she had him cornered. An easy answer to this

²¹ Although there are other terms such as reasons, I prefer evidence since—as a non-countable noun—it can represent one or more supporting points. Evidence also brings a scientific and legal element to the Toulmin discussion.

question might be that the vampire was full from feasting on the victim. That is a legitimate claim. Here is how this claim would look in Toulmin terms: The vampire did not feed upon the tourist *so* she was not hungry (having just fed on the victim) *since* people (including vampires) do not feed when they are satiated *because* consuming too much is bad *unless* the tourist just is not her type.

Let us follow this alternative argument: The vampire does not feed upon the tourist *so* she must only feed on older people like the victim *since* predators often feed on the elder of their prey *because* this will allow the younger prey to reproduce and create a greater food supply. Notice that the evidence does not change, merely the claim. These both look like very solid arguments, but there is a textual problem: the vampire initially goes to bite the tourist's neck, but stops herself.²² When was the last time that you were about to devour your dinner and just before you took that first bite decided you were too full or did not really want to consume that particular food? I guess it is possible but seems unlikely. What are some alternative theories?

How about the vampire does not feed upon the tourist *so* the tourist must remind her of someone the vampire knew and cared for *since* we do not harm those we care for *because* to care for someone means to not harm them. This seems like a

²² In the storyboard version the vampire does not pounce on the protagonist, instead noticing and rejecting him only after he breaks a bottle and slashes his wrist; therefore, either of the above mentioned readings could be logical claims based on this textual evidence.

very solid argument and is supported by evidence from the film, especially when the vampire rushes to the dying tourist and, rather than let him die, saves him by turning him into a vampire.

I have noticed that students are good at finding evidence and making claims, sometimes at the same time. Students struggle with a couple of Toulmin related issues though. The first issue is that students often offer evidence and claims but have a difficult time linking these two together, explicitly offering the “so.” Far too often, I have students who, believing the connection is self-evident, presume that putting evidence anywhere near a claim will make their argument. Take a claim like the tourist is in danger, and evidence like she is a vampire. I have had papers this disconnected. Yes, I see the point that a student like this is *trying* to make, but how much more effective would the argument be if this student simply fleshed this idea out. The vampire just finished off her first victim and if she finds the tourist, he could be next, so he is in danger.

The second issue is that even solid students, who offer connected evidence and claims, still have trouble making these points meaningful. Okay, so the tourist is in mortal danger of becoming the vampire’s next victim, so what? So, the tourist is a human being and we are human beings, so if he could fall victim to a vampire then we could fall victim to a vampire. Yes, the logos here may be questionable, but this warrant is fundamentally how the pathos of “Quartier de la Madeleine” and other

horror texts work. Horror movies elicit their emotional reaction because on some level we have a similar fear. Perhaps we are not afraid of a vampire, but who is not afraid of being murdered? Moreover, how much more grizzly would that murder be if our killer drank our life's blood and fed off our very essence. Having our students explicitly express these warrants makes their papers meaningful and succinct.

Before moving on, I want to revisit Toulmin's discussion of the rebuttal. Students often leave the rebuttal out. Sometimes students reduce any counterargument to such simplistic terms as to be insulting; however, often students seem afraid to even acknowledge that there is another side. It is as if this alternative perspective is so powerful that if students explicitly name it, then the rebuttal will corrupt them. In the next section, we are going to look at the rebuttal and how this aspect makes up the focus of Rogerian argument.

Rogsonian Argument

The last argument type we will look at is that of American psychologist Carl Rogers, who writes, "I would like to propose ... that the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the person or the other group" (344). Our innate desire to judge everything prevents us from understanding one another. Imagine that we went to a movie and after it was finished I say, "I loved that film."

How do you respond? Very likely you will feel compelled to offer some evaluative judgment like “I liked it to” or “Really? I didn’t care for it.” We are not really communicating but judging, evaluating the movie and each other’s comments.

This miscommunication occurs a lot in “Quartier de la Madeleine.” The tourist assesses the vampire as a danger, so he hides from her. She initially decides that the tourist is a good food source, but then rejects him. Feeling this rejection, the tourist slits his wrist to try to get the vampire to change her mind. She rejects him again. These two are not communicating. They are talking at each other, metaphorically speaking. Each is evaluating the other and this judgment stops either from seeing anything but his or her perspective. However, all that changes when the tourist is dying.

Once judgment goes away, both characters can openly communicate. Having fallen down the stairs and bleeding out, the tourist fears nothing from the vampire. There is no evaluation. He is going to die one way or another. He has stopped judging and has started being. He is no longer afraid of the vampire, because she is no longer a threat. Similarly, it is no longer about the vampire’s desires. It does not matter if she is hungry or not. The tourist is dying, so she bites her own wrist and suckles the tourist into undeath. At this moment all judgment, all assessment, all evaluation, is gone. There are simply two people—one human and one vampire—and the first is dying and the second is going to save him. Speaking in Rogerian terms, the tourist

has offered his side that he is going to die. The vampire builds off the tourist's view and offers an alternative: If the tourist drinks from her wrist he will die, but will be reborn as a vampire.

Rogers advocated that when we first acknowledge our opposition without judgment, we could more effectively offer our alternative. For Aristotle, rhetoric was the art of persuasion by defeating all obstacles through overwhelming evidence, which polarizes everyone. The world becomes us and them, humans and vampires, teachers and students. It is not so much about the argument that is crafted, but rather if we are with them or against them. Using Rogerian argument, we first acknowledge the value and intelligence of the other perspective before suggesting how accepting our perspective furthers the discussion. As we explored in chapter three, the theses our students offer will need to be argumentative, which means they will have to advocate a particular side in a multisided issue. Have your students learn Rogerian argument so that they can see that their view is not the only right perspective, but perhaps it is the best in the situation.

In this chapter, we looked at three types of argument: Aristotelian, Toulmin, and Rogerian. Understanding these arguments, our students should recognize them in a film and in their papers. In their initial drafts, our students did not likely fully understand how to construct effective arguments, but now they should be able to

revise their papers specifically with this in mind. In the next chapter, we explore how a work evolves through revision and proofreading.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EVOLUTION OF A WORK

As we watch a good movie or read an excellent essay, it is easy to forget all the effort and time that went in to constructing that particular work. Perhaps there are those rare writers who really can create a phenomenal paper just a few short hours before it is due; however, for all the rest of us, good composition takes time and practice. Thus far, we have only been using “Quartier de le Madeleine” itself, but in this chapter, we are going to get out some of the bonus material for *Paris je t’aime* to see what insights they offer. First, we will look at the “Storyboard for ‘Quartier de la Madeleine’” to compare Natali’s original idea for his film with the final cut that made it to the screen, and how similar storyboard-to-film is to draft-to-revision. Second, we will screen the “Quartier de la Madeleine” behind-the-scenes featurette to see how Natali corrected a big mistake for the final product and how this connects to our students editing their papers.

Revision: To See It Again

As we talked about in chapter three, Natali could have just gone to Paris with no plan for how what he was going to film. While it is possible to make a movie like this, the majority of films have some plan. The plan for many movies often comes from a written screenplay, but—being the visual person he is—Natali drafted a

storyboard for “Quartier de la Madeleine” instead. In this section, we are going to look at this storyboard as Natali’s initial draft for his film and discuss how he revised this version into the final product, as well as how our students can apply these lessons in their own papers.

Several elements of Natali’s storyboard made it into his final product, but many things changed, too. In the storyboard, the protagonist is a man, but this time instead of the telltale tourist accessories, glasses are the only item that distinguishes this young figure. While in the final cut, the tourist travels up the stairs (foreshadowing his death by falling down these stairs), in the storyboard version, the tourist walks along the street at night and a car passes by him (foreshadowing his death by being run over by a car). In both versions, the tourist steps into a trail of blood, and this leads him to discover the vampire, who—after finishing off the victim—wipes the blood from her mouth with her finger. Fearing for his life, the protagonist hides behind a corner instead of hiding behind a scooter. In the storyboard, the vampire walks by the protagonist paying him no notice. In the theatrical version, the vampire pounces upon the tourist, but decides not to feast on him. Feeling rejected, the protagonist of both versions breaks a discarded bottle and slit his wrist, and both versions of the vampire reject this offer and vanish into the night.

While this rejection is seconds before the lightheaded tourist slips on the victim's blood and falls down the stairs, there is a quite a bit more in the storyboard: Rejected, the man in glasses walks along the street. He comes to a poster where he uses the blood from his wrists to draw a heart. (At the end of this version, the camera reveals that it was the bloody drawing of the heart that is the catalyst for the vampire saving the man's life after the car kills him.) In the storyboard version, there is the addition of a cat, which laps up the man's blood. When the man tries to find comfort in this cat, it runs away and a car runs the man down. In both versions, the vampire, while seeming to feast on the fallen man, actually bites her on wrist, nursing him into undeath; however, in the storyboard, the two passionately kiss, while in the film, he devours her and she devours him.

When initially drafting a work, we have all kinds of ideas that we ultimately abandon, like film on the cutting room floor. Although often confused with editing and proofreading, **revision** means to see again, and we use it to talk about substantive alterations to a work, including parts that an author adds, changes, and/or takes out. Author Tim O'Brien writes, "Although the old structure remains, the piece has been substantively revised, in some places by severe cutting, in other places by the addition of new materials" (160). Natali originally envisioned a car and a cat and a heart on a poster, but these did not make the final cut. Similarly, when I drafted this guide, there were whole chapters on film terms and the greater discourse that I have since cut

out.²³ It is a difficult process to abandon work that we have spent countless hours on, but ultimately it is cutting out the tangential that leaves us with a great work that we can be proud of. This lesson is often difficult for our students, but we can use Natali's storyboard to see some of his original ideas and how he eventually revised these ideas into the piece that we see upon the screen and how much better this reworked product is.

Obviously, Natali did not revise everything. In both versions, there are the same characters (a man, a vampire, and a victim), the man tries to tempt the vampire by slitting his wrists but the vampire rejects him, the man dies, and the vampire resurrects him as another vampire. This core is the essence that Natali wanted to tell. Only the details changed. When talking to students, I help them see their topic and then point out the details that are not related that they should cut. (The hardest part here is when students have these tangents to meet a page-length and/or source requirement.)

One of the most effective ways to highlight our students' tangents is to have them reverse outline their essays. Unlike a traditional outline that we construct before a work, a **reverse outline** is an outline created after we have completed a full draft.

Here is what a reverse outline for Natali's storyboard might look like: Introduction to

²³ Actually, this is the *third* complete rewrite of my master's thesis on *Paris, je t'aime*; at this point, I have cast aside hundreds of pages, abandoned on my computer's desktop.

setting and protagonist. Car passes by (foreshadowing death and bookending film). Man steps in blood trail, which leads to vampire. Vampire finishes off victim and leaves. Protagonist slits wrist to tempt vampire, but vampire rejects him and vanishes. Protagonist draws heart with blood. Cat drinks his blood. A car kills protagonist. Vampire returns and saves protagonist. They kiss. The end. Even from this quick outline, we can see how random him drawing with his own blood is as well as how tangential the cat is.

Although both are very engaging and poetic, neither is necessary for the story, and Natali ultimately cuts out the cat and the car. The great thing about Natali's changes is that they refocus the story on just three characters. "Quartier de la Madeleine" is a closed system. In the storyboard, there was the protagonist, the vampire, the victim, the cat, the first driver, and the second driver (presuming that these were two separate vehicles), but in the final cut, it is just the tourist, the vampire, and the victim (who is dead). By changing the car to a stairwell, Natali also avoids the tangential questions of who was this driver and why would this driver run someone over and not stop? By cutting out these extra characters, Natali is alienating his character. It is late at night. The tourist is alone in the world: Just him ... and a vampire.

This type of focus is what we want to help our students achieve. In their initial drafts, our students can follow their thoughts in any direction, but as we go through

the revising process with them, we will guide our students toward a focused topic that eliminates the superfluous. Using a reverse outline helps highlight disconnected thoughts, encouraging our students to say what they really want to say and not get lost on a tangent.

Proofreading: Fixing *Mistakes*

We just looked at how our ideas change while we revise our works. These revisions are our way to see our paper again and make it more refined. There is nothing mechanically wrong with the cat and car that Natali cut out; he just could tell a better story without them. In this section, we are going to move on to an actual mistake Natali made and how he corrected it, and apply this to mistakes that our students make and how we will encourage them to correct these. Changing content is revision; fixing surface errors is **proofreading**. However, an important note before moving on: It is imperative that we have our students revise first and then proofread, since it is likely that many of the issues that they would otherwise correct may be cut out first through thoughtful revision. On to Natali's error ...

Have your students recall the great tracking shot where the camera follows the trail of blood from the perspective of the tourist all the way to the dying face of the victim. This is a fantastic use of the tracking shot to focus the audience's attention and to inflict the gravity of the situation upon them. The issue is that the first time

Natali filmed this shot, the camera actually hit Wes Craven! One of the French crew advised Natali that “We need to take precautions so that the camera doesn’t hit him in the back.” Forewarned, Natali goes on to explain what is about to happen to Craven: “The idea behind this shot is that we just want to see that you are dying so the camera is going to come in quite quickly and is going to land right about here and at that moment ...” At this moment, Craven interrupts and asks, “It will stop right?” Natali reassures him by saying, “It will stop. Mechanically it can’t go any further.” The problem is that, despite all of Natali’s reassurance, the camera slows down but does not stop.²⁴ Natali thought he had everything under control, but in this case, he made a miscalculation. He made a mistake and had to fix it. Thankfully, Craven was not hurt and was a good sport about being hit with a camera, so Natali filmed another take of this shot (“Quartier de la Madeleine” Behind-the-Scenes Featurette).

Our students will make also make mistakes. Reassure them that it happens to the best of us, from professional filmmakers like Natali to professional teachers like us. We each have a system for addressing errors and encouraging students to learn

²⁴ Whenever I watch the “Quartier de la Madeleine” behind-the scenes featurette, I jokingly think, “It isn’t bad enough that Natali has to cinematically kill off the master of horror, but he had to add insult to injury hitting him with a camera too.”

from their mistakes.²⁵ When you first return papers, consider showing this excerpt from the “Quartier de la Madeleine” behind-the-scenes featurette to encourage students to understand that mistakes are part of the learning process. Perhaps even consider offering a way for these students to re-earn some of these lost points by showing that they can relearn how to do it correctly through thoughtful proofreading.

In this chapter, we looked at how films change from storyboard to film and how similar this process is to revision. We also explored how mistakes can be fixed through retakes and proofreading. By looking at how a work grew from an initial draft to a final product, we see how texts interact with an earlier version of themselves. Now revised and polished, our work is finished and ready to join the larger conversation.

²⁵ To help students become aware of their patterns of error, I use a modified version of Richard Haswell’s “Minimal Marking” that I have found to be quite effective in creating lasting improvements in lower-order concerns.

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